AR 10577 William Schurtman Collection S 3912

Destination Shanghai: Refuge for Stateless Jews, 1938-1948

I Art and Cultural Life in Shanghai

Hans Jacoby
Portrait of Mr. La
Drawing, 1941

Hans Jacoby
Portrait of Bao Bao
Chinese Maid of Prof.
Willy Tonn's
Oil on canvas, 1940's

Hans Jacoby
Chinese Theater Masks
Oil on canvas, 1941

Hans Jacoby
Portrait of a Religious
Figure in Shanghai
Drawing, 1943

David Ludwig Bloch
Chinese Street
Print, handcolored, 1940's (83.153)

David Ludwig Bloch
Greeting Card
Print, 1940's (86.17)

David Ludwig Bloch
Greeting Card
Print, 1940's (86.18)

David Ludwig Bloch
Under Kubota. Hoya Regime, Shanghai
Print, 1943-1945 (89.9)

David Ludwig Bloch
Shanghai, 1947
Print, 1947 (89.10)

David Ludwig Bloch
Shanghai Ghetto
Print, 1943-1945 (89.11)

David Ludwig Bloch
The Wailing Wall at the corner of
Chusan and Ward Roads
Drawing, 1940's (86.29)

David Ludwig Bloch
Street Scene
Water color, 1940's

Max Heimann
Self-Portrait
Pencil and ink, 1942

Schiff
Chinese Woman in Shanghai
Drawing, 1943

Paul Fischer
Self-Portrait
Drawing and photo, 1943

David Ludwig Bloch
Yin and Yan

Book of Woodcuts

Hans Bernfeld
4 Street Scenes
Color drawings

- D. L. Bloch art exhibit, 1942, list of exhibits (AR 7199)

- theater playbill, Clarence Day "Life with Father" November 11, 1948 (AR 7199)

- Hans Jacobi art exhibits, membership cards, autographs of other refugees

- exhibition announcement for David Ludwig Bloch works, 1942

-Artist Club Shanghai

-Various stagebills for Shanghai Municipal Orchestra, cabaret etc.

- Red dress, silk, appr. 1945
-Photos of theater performances
-European Jewish Artist Society program

II Community Life: Chronology of Events and Documents

-Displaced Person Card (Kurt Baeck Collection)
-Jued. Winterhilfe fundraising event
-Article: Es gibt keine Rueckwanderung
-proclamation/restriction of residence for stateless refugees
-Community Assoc. Shanghai letter re. taxation
-jued. Gemeinde letr. re Japanese classes
-Shanghai Youth Community "Battle of Wits"
- Posters and Newspapers:
- unidentified, black-yellow-red (needs to be flattened and encapsulated, Chinese writing to be identified)

Ernst Herzog Collection (AR C.1560 3935 V3/1)
-Resident Certificate
-Work Contract for Hans Herzog

- Shanghai Jewish Chronicle, May 9, 1943, "Four Years"

- various newspapers from Shanghai, Shanghai Jewish Chronicle, Our Life, Shanghai Echo

Community Life/Health Related Issues

-Medizinische Monatshefte

-copy of Hospital treatment card

-Menu No. 5 (food/health)

-Wie erhalte ich mich gesund in Shanghai S. M. C. Public Health Department, 1940's

Community Life/ Religion

- Jiskor announcement for November 10,

1938, on November 9, 1947 (A R 7199)

-Purim program

-Photo of Synagogue Choir

- group portrait, 15 men in talis (Herbert Buky, AR 5143)

-newspaper clipping on synagogue music

III The Jewish Community of Shanghai: A Photographic Overview

- flooded street scenes showing extreme weather conditions (AR 4847)

- scene harbor with tall building in back, i.e. hotel later used by Japanese as prison (AR 4847)

- front of living quarter for refugees called "Heim" (AR 3477)

- interior of "Heim" (AR 3477)

- Mr. Hoya (Japanese administrator, the "King of Shanghai"), handing out passes to leave the ghetto (AR 4847)

- Mr. Hoya after the war (AR 4847)

- refugee children, needlework class, 1945

- photo of emigrant eating soup

- refugee children playing ball, 1945

- gate post with various business signs of physicians, in English, German and Chinese

- Anne Bernfeld photos, pages from photo album, individual pictures

- entrance gate to one of the lanes, living quarters off the main streets

- street cafe, European customers in front, Chinese store signs in back

- street vendors, Europeans selling second hand clothing, Chinese customers

- sign "Stateless Refugees are Prohibited to Pass Here Without Permission"

- bombed out living quarters, July 1945, after American air raid

- photo of brother Ralph Hirsch in rickshaw cab, 1946/47

- parading Japanese soldiers, Nazi Swastica flag in background

- gathering of Jews from Shanghai in the USA, 1950

- stage scene, refugee theater group,

1939

- barbed wire at entrance to French part of Shanghai (Harry Colish pictures)

IV A Family Emigrates to Shanghai: The Buky Family

Buky Collection (AR S 48/8)
-Sample of visa application to Japanese consulate
-Letter of Hamburg-Amerika-Linie
-Invoice for shipping of baggage
-Ticket (Chinese)
-Schedule of NDL to Far East
-American President Lines receipt
-Atlantic Post/Bordzeitung, Hamburg-Amerika Linie)
-cable advising emigration of Gertrud Buky
-letter of Chinese Consulate Gen'l admitting Buky
-permit tax document, Shanghai
-documents pertaining to emigration

V The End of the Shanghai Ghetto

- special "V" issue of Our Life (National, Democratic Organ of Jewish Thought, September 7, 1945

post-war program American Seminar

-Good-Bye Concert of Charles Albert Band (card)

Showcase 2nd floor - Willi Tonn and the Asia Seminar

-Asia Seminary Aims
-Asia Seminary programs
-Asia Seminary sign
-Emigrantenuniversität
-W. Tonn Lebenslauf
-Newspaper clip about him
-Eröffnung Asia Seminary card
-American Seminary
- " " card
- " " membership lists, membership book
-letter re emigr. to Australia -Israeli Seminary

- lecture program and various documents regarding the adult
education programs of the refugee university (Asia Seminar) since 1943 and

Lobby Showcases

Hugo Burkhard
Tanz Mal Jude!: Von Dachau bis Shanghai. Nuremberg, 1967

Ossi Lewin
Almanac Shanghai
Shanghai, 1946/47

Franziska Tausig
Shanghai-Passage: Flucht und Exil einer Wienerin. Vienna, 1987.

Alfred Kneucker
Zuflucht in Shanghai: Aus den

Erlebnissen eines österreichischen Arztes in der Emigration, 1938-1945. Vienna, 1984

Ernest Heppner
Shanghai Refuge: A Memoir of the World War II Jewish Ghetto. Nebraska, 1994.

Video tape of German documentary "Flucht nach Shanghai," 1 hour

Mr. Bortnick

Sociology 1w

REPORT ON:

The Jewish Refugee Community in Shanghai

William Schurtman

January 1954

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INTRODUCTION

The Second World War produced numerous tales of wandering and migration but one of the strangest and most interesting of these was undoubtedly the story of the Jewish community in Shanghai.

I chose this community as the topic of my term paper for a number of reasons. In the first place, my parents and I were members of this group for almost nine years, which affords me an opportunity to describe it at first hand. But I should like to stress at the very outset that this report is not intended to be an autobiography. I have drawn extensively on my own memory and experience, of course, but I have tried to render this account as impersonal as possible.

An even more important reason for my selection of this particular group were the rather unusual circumstances surrounding its existence. We have here the story of about 20,000 middle and lower-class European Jews -- of predominantly German and Austrian origin -- who were literally thrust into a completely alien environment. In order to survive, these refugees were forced to modify their manner of living in numerous ways; and yet, despite the constant trials and tribulations of their new existence, they were able to retain an amazing amount of their old cultural patterns.

I am fully aware of the fact that similar Jewish communities were established in other parts of the world -- notably in South America. From my own experience in Bolivia, however, I know that these South American communities were of a much more permanent nature. The refugees there often became completely integrated into the life of the country. They learned the language and the customs, and they eventually became citizens. Many of them are still living in these countries and plan to stay there indefinitely. In Shanghai, on the other hand, the Jewish refugees never planned to settle permanently. They regarded Shanghai merely as a temporary haven, and the vast majority intended to migrate on to other countries --

especially the United States -- or to return to Europe as soon as conditions permitted. Few of them ever learned to speak Chinese, and even fewer tried to understand the local customs. As a result, the Shanghai community differed greatly from other Jewish communities, and as I show in this paper, it had to cope with conditions which South American refugees, to say nothing of immigrants to the United States or Canada, never even dreamed of. Moreover, while most of the other communities are still in existence, the Shanghai colony has disappeared. It lasted for a scant dozen years, and then it dissolved almost as quickly as it had become established.

Having tried to justify my selection of this topic for a term paper in anthropology, I should now like to say a few words about some of the problems I encountered in writing this report. I feel that a reader can usually gain a much better understanding of an account if he is made familiar with some of the difficulties the author had to face.

I had relatively little trouble in securing material for my paper. I did not place too much reliance on my own memory, since I was rather young when I first came to Shanghai and I was only a little over fifteen years old when I left the city in 1947. However, I received much valuable information from my parents, and particularly from my father, who had been active in several committees and who was intimately acquainted with the problems and history of the Shanghai community. In addition, I interviewed several local friends of my parents, who had also lived in Shanghai and who corroborated and complemented the information my parents had given me. While I lay no pretensions to scientific accuracy, I believe the facts given in this report are reasonably correct, but I must reemphasize that they are based essentially on human memory and not on written records.

It wasn't till I began to organize my material that I started running into trouble. I suppose it is difficult enough to set down a comprehensiv

description of a primitive group; but to describe a modern group -- whose cultural patterns, in my opinion, are infinitely more complex -- seemed to be an almost insurmountable task. Moreover, the very factor which had been an asset when I was first gathering my material -- namely, the fact that I had been a member of this group myself -- now turned out to be a distinct liability. I am convinced that a competent outside observer would find that even those sections of the paper, which I regard as being completely objective, nevertheless contain a considerable amount of unconscious bias. And as we learned in the course of this semester, an outsider can always spot things which the natives (in this case, my informants and myself) take so much for granted that they fail even to notice them.

Finally, there were the technical problems of writing what was supposed to be an anthropological report. Naturally, I did not expect to turn in a paper which would even approach a genuine anthropological or sociological study. But, at the same time, I did not want it to be merely an entertaining story. I am sure I could have done a much better job if I had used a narrative style throughout the entire paper, but I wanted to make at least a stab at using an anthropological approach.

My first attempts at topic classification were rather discouraging. I was sorely tempted to adopt Murdock's technique* of lumping all the facts together without following any easily discernible order and without making use of any sort of subtitles or divisions. Murdock, however, is an established anthropologist, and evidently can get away with that sort of thing. After considerable soul-searching, I came to the conclusion that an amateur like myself could not afford to use a similar approach.

As a result, I have tried to divide my paper into several distinct sections, most of which have a tendency to overlap, of course. I have

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* At least the one that he uses in his book "Our Primitive Contemporaries"

used historical sequences wherever they seemed required, but on the whole I have tried to confine myself to general descriptions, as well as occasional interpretations and evaluations. In order to fill in the necessary background for the reader, I have begun this paper with a brief historical account.

HISTORY

The city of Shanghai was one of the five Chinese treaty ports which were opened to foreign trade after the Anglo-Chinese War of 1842. Located at the mouth of the Yangtze River, Shanghai soon became the leading seaport in the Far East and when Pearl Harbor came, it was one of the largest metropolises of the world with a population exceeding 5 Million. The city actually consisted of three separate sectors: the old Chinese city; the International settlement (made up of the original American and British concessions); and the French Concession. Except for the first-named sector, the city was not under Chinese jurisdiction. The French administered their own concession, while the International Settlement was run by an autonomous Municipal Council consisting of locally elected businessmen and attorneys -- mostly British and Americans.

A great many books and articles have been written about the fabulous life led by the "Old China Hands" or "Shanghailanders" -- about their privileges under the doctrine of "extraterritoriality", their country clubs, the race course, the Canidrome (where dog races were held), and last, but certainly not least, about what was reputedly the longest bar in the world. A good deal of this glamor was gone by the time the first large waves of Jewish immigrants began to hit Shanghai towards the end of 1938. The Japanese had taken over the Chinese sectors of the city and the surrounding countryside a year earlier, after a bitter and bloody struggle, and the spirits of the foreign businessmen had been somewhat dampened. But the city was still a fascinating cosmopolitan mixture of

East and West when we first laid eyes upon it, and it was to remain that way -- even through the Japanese occupation -- until it was finally conquered by the Chinese Communists.

Although the refugees from Hitler represented the largest influx of Jews that Shanghai had ever witnessed, they were by no means the first ones to settle in the city. As early as the end of the last century, a number of Sephardic Arabian Jews had established their own colony in the city. Most of them were British subjects, and many of them had done very well for themselves. One of them, Sir Victor Sassoon, was reputedly one of the wealthiest men in the British Empire. In addition to these Sephardic Jews, there were also close to ten thousand White Russian Jews. These had fled to Shanghai after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 -- along with about forty thousand other White Russians -- and had succeeded in establishing a very successful, middle-class community. They were active in the export-import trade; they owned most of the city's modern stores; and although they were never really accepted by the top-level foreign society in Shanghai, they led a very comfortable existence and their position was certainly comparable to that of the average middle-class Jew in America.

Although a few German Jews had emigrated to Shanghai as early as 1933, the real rush did not begin until the latter part of 1938. When my parents and I arrived in Shanghai in September 1938 there were only a few hundred Hitler refugees ahead of us. Even then, the established "Shanghailanders" were already complaining about the "tremendous" refugee problem. They were in for a rude surprise, because during the next three years, and especially in 1939, approximately 20,000 refugees landed in Shanghai. Most of them came on Italian liners. The Italian Lloyd Triestino ran a sort of "ferry service" between Italy and Shanghai, bringing in thousands of refugees a month -- mostly Germans, Austrians, and a few Czechs -- and literally "dumping" them on the Bund: the famous

long street bordering Shanghai's waterfront. In addition to the water-route a smaller number of refugees, consisting mostly of Polish Jews, made the long and arduous journey across Siberia. They settled first in Japan, but shortly before Pearl Harbor, the Japanese moved them to Shanghai.

People have often wondered why so many refugees chose to emigrate to Shanghai of all places. The answer is very simple; Shanghai, being an international city, was virtually the only place in the world which did not require an entrance visa, and a Jew who had the S.S. and Gestapo panting at his heels, and who found the doors of all the "civilized" nations of the world practically locked, could not afford to be very discriminating in his choice.

And having furnished the reader with this brief, and admittedly inadequate and incomplete, historical background, I shall now begin my descriptio of the refugee community as such.

ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION

By far and away the greatest problem confronting the Jewish refugees was the question of bare survival. They had escaped the concentration camps and gas chambers of the Nazis, but they were now faced with the problem of making a living in a completely foreign environment.

Many of the refugees who landed in Shanghai were virtually penniless. They had no relatives or friends awaiting them; they did not speak the language; they knew nothing of the city or its inhabitants -- in fact, many of them had decided to go to Shanghai on the spur of the moment. If it had not been for the aid that was promptly forthcoming, I have little doubt that hundreds -- and perhaps even thousands -- of refugees would have perished.

Shanghai had no organized social agencies in the Western sense. Destitute Chinese begged on the street, and in the winter quietly froze to death or died of malnutrition. The White Russian and Portuguese communities had small relief organizations to help their own indigent, and

there were no other Europeans in need prior to the coming of the refugees.

When the influx first began, a group of long-resident local Jews quickly organized a committee to help them, but the relatively meager resources of this committee were soon overwhelmed and regular Jewish relief agencies like the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the H.I.A.S. took over many of its functions.

Location and Housing: At first, an attempt was made to find individual rooms and apartments for the refugees in various parts of the city, but as every incoming Lloyd Triestino liner discharged additional hundreds of helpless immigrants, the situation became acute.

Those refugees who could afford it sought homes for themselves. The wealthier ones secured rooms or apartments in the International Settlement and the French Concession; the poorer ones were obliged to settle across the river in a Japanese-controlled sector of the city known as Hongkew, where the rents were much lower. In 1937 Hongkew had been one of the focal points in the Sino-Japanese Battle of Shanghai, and the area had been devastated by Japanese bombers. When we arrived in Shanghai towards the end of 1938, many sections of Hongkew, which had once been a populous borough of the city, were in ruins and were almost completely deserted.

But before long new buildings were being put up to house the incoming masses of refugees. I believe the reader may be able to gain a better picture of housing conditions if I describe our own home, which was certainly one of the "better" types. When we first arrived in Shanghai, our total family wealth consisted of approximately ten dollars. However, both of my parents were fortunate enough to secure work, and for the first few years we lived in relative luxury. We had an apartment in the International Settlement, and we were even able to afford summer vacations in North China resorts like Tsingtao. After Pearl Harbor, however, conditions changed drastically. The Japanese Occupation Forces

issued a decree compelling all anti-Hitler Jewish refugees to move into a restricted ghetto-like area in the heart of Hongkew. We were forced to abandon our apartment, and after paying a fantastic amount of "key-money (a flat sum given to the landlord illegally, in addition to the regular rent) we were finally able to secure a single, small room in what had formerly been a Chinese school. We were to live in this small (9' x 12'), dark and badly-ventilated room till a few weeks before the end of the war, when our house was destroyed by American bombers; after that, we had to move into an even smaller room. It goes without saying, of course, that our room did not have any private bath or kitchen -- or even running water. The entire building had a common toilet. This toilet did not have any running water either, and every morning a coolie would show up with what was euphemistically known as a "honey cart", and carry away the waste to be sold as manure. The building also had a common shower, but this could only be used at certain times, and most people preferred to wash themselves in little basins in their own rooms. My mother had to do all her cooking on a little charcoal stove, no larger than a flowerpot, which could be kept going only by constant and assiduous fanning. Since it would have taken too long to boil water on one of these ridiculous little contraptions, it was my daily mission to run down to the "hot water man", whose water-boiling establishment can be found at any Shanghai streetcorner (at least in the poorer neighbourhoods), and buy a kettle of hot water.

In the summer we were plagued with extremely hot and humid weather, which brought no relief at night. The New York summers are faintly reminiscent of this weather, but they are not nearly as bad. Naturally, we had no air-conditioning or even electric fans, and people went around with a minimum of clothing, which was quickly soaked through by perspiration and had to be changed several times a day. The winters, on the other hand, were bitterly cold and chillblains and frostbite were a

common complaint. In order to heat our little room, we had a small pot-bellied stove, which also served as an auxiliary cooking range; but fuel was expensive, and we could only use it for limited periods of time. Fortunately, our building had electricity, which could be used only for lighting purposes, but during the war there were constant power failures and, in addition, the Japanese often sought to enforce air-raid blackouts by simply shutting off the city's power.

As can be imagined, food was very scarce and expensive, especially during the war years. I don't believe anyone actually starved to death among the refugees, but there were numerous cases of extreme malnutrition. Buying new clothing was virtually out of the question, of course, and most people had to make shift with the clothes they had brought over from Europe. As a result, most of the refugees soon took on a very ragged appearance, and it was not uncommon for some of the poorer ones to run around in the winter with rags tied around their feet and newspaper stuck down their shirts.

So far, I have described the living conditions of the more well-to-do immigrants, who could at least make some effort to take care of themselves But, in addition, there were thousands of refugees who were completely helpless and destitute. To aid these unfortunate individuals, the local committees -- supported by grants from Sir Victor Sassoon and other wealthy Western residents, both Jewish and Gentile -- established a number of shelter camps. These camps were improvised from hastily converted and reconstructed schools, warehouses, army barracks, and the like. It was thought that these shelters, which were to last for twelve years, would be only temporary, and in any event there was not enough time or money to transform them into anything resembling a decent human habitation. Scores of families were crowded into small, ill-ventilated dormitories. There was no privacy whatsoever, with men, women and

children being forced to live in the same room. Each family would stake out a few square feet for itself and its belongings, and of course there were constant boundary disputes, with neighbors arguing ~~[illegible]~~ over an inch of floorspace with as much heat as American homeowners disputing the location of a backyard fence. Sanitary conditions were deplorable, of course, and it is probably a tribute to the refugee doctors that there were no great camp epidemics, despite the fact that the Chinese population of Shanghai suffered from year-round cholera, typhoid, typhus, smallpox, and dysentery epidemics.

Once the question of providing shelter for these refugees had been solved, the next big problem was that of feeding them. The committee, whose functions were subsequently taken over by the A.J.J.D.C. (Joint) set up make-shift kitchens -- which were also to last for the next twelve years -- where over 8,000 people could obtain a scanty, but nonetheless indispensable, daily meal. Particular efforts were made, of course, to provide the younger children with such necessities as milk, and there were numerous instances of parents going virtually without food in order to provide more for their children.

Occupations: Although thousands of refugees lived in the shelter camps, an even greater number were determined to make a living of their own, and many succeeded, although most of them required at least part-time relief in the way of free bread (whose price was truly exorbitant) and other small benefits.

When the refugees came to Shanghai, there were virtually no jobs open in any of the city's offices, and of course they were in no position to compete with Chinese coolie labor.

Many of the immigrants became door-to-door salesmen, and the sight of scores of these so-called "Hausierer", scurrying across the Garden Bridge, which connected Hongkew and the rest of the city, every morning

soon became a familiar part of the Shanghai scene. At first, they were quite successful, because this type of salesmanship was something complete new in Shanghai, and they managed to peddle everything from toothbrushes to shoelaces to the wealthy foreigners and Chinese. But as their numbers increased, and as their clients finally began to develop sales resistance, business ~~xxxxxxxx~~ fell off, and only a very few managed to earn an adequate living that way.

The vast majority of refugees remained in Hongkew where they succeede in establishing a flourishing domestic economy. They reconstructed dozens of shattered streets, using the very rubble to erect the new buildings and shops, and Hongkew soon began to take on the appearance of a small German or Austrian city -- if we allow for such incongruous additions as Chinese "hot-water men", rickshas, coolies, etc. Hundreds of business establishments were opened, catering mostly to refugee customers. There were groceries, pharmacies, bakeries, plumbers, locksmiths, barbers, tailors, cobblers, milliners -- and, of course, there were the inevitable Viennese "coffeehouses", without which the average native of Vienna would find it difficult to exist. A few enterprising souls even established small factories, turning out such products as soap, candles, knitted goods, leatherware, and especially European-type food products -- sausages, confections, soft drinks, etc. Many of these products also found a ready market among the Chinese, since they had previously been unknown or had been imported from abroad.

Former professionals had a much more difficult time, of course. Doctors and dentists soon set up little offices and did a fairly good business, although there was a proportionately great number of them, since many of Germany's and Austria's physicians had been Jews. Enginee and architects encountered greater difficulties in finding work, although they aided in the reconstruction of Hongkew. Lawyers, economis

college professors, and the like, found no outlets for their abilities, of course. Some of them became peddlers; others sold newspapers; many were compelled to live in the shelter camps, where they engaged in local politics and helped in directing the affairs of the community.

By the end of 1941, the Jewish refugees had succeeded in establishing a surprisingly successful community, and it has been estimated that if there had been no Pacific War, at least one-third could have settled in Shanghai permanently. (This is based on the assumption, of course, that if there had been no war in the Far East, the Communists might never have taken over China). After Pearl Harbor, however, conditions deteriorated rapidly, and the economic situation of the refugees became desperate again. The Japanese took over the entire city, and after spending a year learning how to run a complex metropolis of this size, they interned all Allied nationals, including Americans, British and Dutch residents. They were not quite certain how to treat the Jewish refugees. On the one hand, these Jews were obviously anti-Axis and were at least emotional supporters of the Allies; but, on the other hand, they were not Allied nationals and could not be placed in internment camps. After the war, it was discovered that the local Nazis had offered some helpful suggestions on how to dispose of the refugee problem, including such thoroughgoing and well-tested methods as gas chambers and incinerators. Fortunately, the Japanese were a little more civilized and humane than their European allies, and refused to adopt such drastic measures. In the end, they decided to herd all Jewish refugees who had entered Shanghai after 1937 into the small Hongkew Ghetto, which I have already described above. The area was surrounded by barbed wire and sentries and all Jews were forbidden to leave the ghetto under penalty of imprisonment or even death. As a result, the refugees were placed in the rather anomalous position of

living in a quasi-internment camp, but at the same time having to provide for their own living.

A few hundred refugees, who had jobs or business establishments in the city, were permitted to leave the ghetto during the daytime. They had to carry special identification buttons and passes, which were renewable every few weeks. The person in charge of issuing these passes -- which represented the livelihood of many families -- was a sadistic and unpredictable little Japanese official by the name of Goya. Mr. Goya, who liked to call himself the "King of the Jews", was easily the most feared individual in Hongkew. Unfortunately, I do not have the time to discuss the personality and actions of Mr. Goya in detail. Despite the fact that he was responsible for the death and severe beatings and punishment of a number of refugees, to say nothing of the indescribable mental anguish and humiliation which he caused to those unfortunates who had to depend on his good will for the renewal of their passes, many of Mr. Goya's actions appear rather humorous in retrospect. He still constitutes one of the chief topics of conversation, whenever former refugees get together for a talkfest.

The Sephardic Jews were of course interned as British citizens, but the White Russian Jews managed to lead a relatively unmolested existence, and were not compelled to live in the ghetto. There have been stories that they had to pay huge sums of money to the Japanese for the privilege of being left alone, but regardless of how they did it, it was fortunate for the refugees that they managed to stay out. When the war broke out, remittances from the United States were cut off, of course, and the situation of the thousands of destitute refugees living in the shelter camps looked very precarious. The local representatives of the Joint were given authority, however, to raise loans among the Russian Jews and other non-interned foreigners, and these loans -- which were promptly repaid after the war with a large amount of interest --

helped to sustain thousands of immigrants, who would otherwise have starved to death.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

Shanghai was never a city with very clear-cut political lines. In 1938, for instance, there were so many different governments, each with its own officialdom, bureaucracy, police force, etc., that it was difficul to tell where the jurisdiction of one began and the other left off. There was the French Concession government, the Municipal Council in the International Settlement, the Chinese puppet regime of Wang Ching-wei, and overshadowing everything were the Japanese Occupation forces, which also had their own internal troubles, as the Army, Navy, Gendarmerie and Civilian Administration vied for greater jurisdiction.

In the midst of all this confusion, it was only natural for the Jewish refugees to adopt a certain amount of self-government. The various relief committees formed the nuclei of all political organization, of course, and they were often treated as the official representatives of the community by the Japanese authorities. Each shelter camp had its own elected officials, and in addition to an administrative staff which supervised all camp activities, the camps also had their own quasi-officia police force known as the "Heim Polizei", whose function it was to maintain order and discipline. The refugees living outside the camps often formed small political units of their own. For instance, the inhabitants of the old school in which we spent the war years, elected committees to run the building, and other neighbor-hood groups did the same thing. The various governmental groups often had arbitration courts, which tried to settle internal disputes in an amicable fashion, without recourse to the Japanese authorities.

In general, however, there was no single overall community government, and there were certainly no community-wide elections. The

Japanese were content to let the refugees run their own affairs, so long as these did not interfere with any Japanese plans. What they did was to select certain prominent community leaders and hold them responsible for the actions of the entire group. These leaders had to help the Japanese organize special refugee patrols, who had to do sentry duty at the boundaries of the ghetto and make certain that none of their compatriots left the ghetto without having the required pass. In addition, they established refugee air-raid wardens and stretcher bearers, who proved themselves very useful when the ghetto was bombed in July 1945.

In a way, the Japanese actually came to regard the Jewish ghetto as a distinct asset. It did not cost them anything, because they were not compelled to house or feed the refugees. At the same time, they found all sorts of uses for the area. They surmised correctly that the Americans would hesitate to bomb the Jewish ghetto, whose location was well-known to them, of course. Consequently, they used the ghetto as a repository for munition dumps, oil depots, radio stations, army barracks and the like. Apparently, they must have overdone it, because shortly before the end of the war, the Americans -- who had hitherto scrupulously avoided Hongkew -- finally conducted a number of air-raids during which many houses (including our own) were demolished, and several refugees (in addition to hundreds of Chinese), lost their lives.

In retrospect, it seems to me that the refugees did an excellent job of governing themselves under the most trying conditions, and a great deal of credit must be given to the leaders of the community, whose untiring efforts helped greatly in making the lot of the immigrants a little easier to bear.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

As indicated previously, most of the refugees came from middle-

and lower-class backgrounds, and despite the enforced closeness and intermingling, many of them managed to retain the old social stratifications. It was pathetic to see how many former professional people insisted on retaining their old titles. Ragged newspaper vendors were respectfully addressed as Herr Doktor; one shabbily-dressed old man insisted on being called Herr Oberlandesgerichtsrat.

There was a considerable amount of internal friction, of course, but on the whole the community showed a surprising amount of solidarity. Austrians and Germans often regarded each other resentfully, but usually combined to villify the Polish Jews, whom they despised. There were the usual personal quarrels and fights, which can be found in even the best-run community, but as I have already pointed out, these were generall settled by refugee arbitration courts without recourse to the Japanese or Chinese authorities. The amazing thing, in my opinion, is that the people actually bore up so well. Far from their homelands, constantly fighting for bare survival, harassed by Japanese and Chinese, and finally by American bombers, they nevertheless maintained a remarkable degree of stability and equilibrium.

I suppose this is as good a point as any to insert a few words about the philosophy and outlook of these refugees. As I have stressed repeatedly throughout this paper, most of them regarded their stay in Shanghai as an unpleasant, but at any rate temporary, interlude, and they lived only for the day when they could wander on to America and Australia or return to Europe. They followed the war with intense interest, and despite the fact that most of the war news consisted of Japanese propaganda, they could tell almost instinctively when the Allies had won another great victory.

Although the community did not have any magazines or journals, it did have a daily newspaper -- the "Shanghai Jewish Chronicle", which carried local news and whatever foreign news the Japanese authorities

would permit it to print. In addition, a few refugees owned radios; they had to listen mostly to Japanese-controlled English-language stations, but they did obtain some encouraging news from a Soviet radio station in Shanghai, whose operation the Japanese were compelled to permit, since Russia and Japan were not at war with each other. Short-wave sets were strictly forbidden, of course, but a few daring individuals had them anyway, and spread the group via the community grapevine. One of the most prevalent commodities was undoubtedly the "rumor"; people seemed to delight in passing on, and even embellishing, the most nonsensical tales, and Chusan Road in Hongkew's business center became known as "Rumor Alley." One of the most prevalent rumors was, of course, that the war had ended, and one day the rumor was finally true -- the war had ended ! But the rumors did not stop with the end of the war, and when we left Shanghai in July 1947, rumor-manufacturing was still one of the community's chief industries.

RELIGION

The vast majority of the refugees were Jewish, of course, but there were a few anti-Hitler Christians among them. Some of the Jewish men had Gentile wives and children, and in addition, a minute number were converted to Catholicism and Protestantism and received a few extra benefits from the missionaries.

It is interesting to note that the German and Austrian Jews did not build themselves a synagogue, but of course it is difficult to say whether this was due to lack of religious zeal, or poverty, or both. The more orthodox Jews made use of a small White Russian temple in the neighborhood; the Reformist Congregations met in such places as school auditoriums, meetings halls, etc. On the whole, religion did not seem to play an outstanding role in the community. Most of the Jews kept the usual holidays, but I don't believe they were any more or less

religious than others living in more favorable circumstances. One exception that must be noted were the Polish Jews. Most of these Jews remained completely orthodox and maintained several Yeshivas and Talmud Thoras. One of these seminaries was said to be the oldest Yeshiva in the world. Its 500 rabbinical students and their teachers had come all the way from Poland as a unit, and had reached Shanghai with not a single student, teacher or book lost or even a lesson missed. They set up their school immediately upon arriving in the city, and proceeded with their studies, almost completely oblivious to what went on around them.

EDUCATION

In 1938 Shanghai had a number of British, French and American schools and universities. One of these was the Shanghai Jewish School, which had been established jointly by the Sephardic and White Russian communities. The school, which was located in the center of the city, had a British headmaster and a number of British teachers and was run strictly along English lines -- even during the war, when the British staff was interned and had to be replaced by an English-speaking White Russian ~~xxxxxx~~ faculty

The first Hitler refugees to arrive in Shanghai, including my parents sent their children to the Shanghai Jewish School, but as thousands of immigrants began to pour into Hongkew, it became obvious that they would need a school of their own. With the aid of a wealthy Sephardic Jew by the name of Kadoorie, the Hongkew Community established its own school, and most of the refugee children received their education there. Despite the fact that the instructors were all refugees, classes were conducted in English, which soon became the second mother-tongue of the children. It had very high continental academic standards, which it managed to maintain even during the war, when it operated under Japanese supervision

In addition to this combined elementary and high school, the refugees also set up a number of small trade and vocational schools.

They never established a university, of course, but there is no doubt in my mind that they would have accomplished even this if the community had lasted long enough.

RECREATION

One of the chief factors which made life bearable for the refugees was the quantity and variety of recreation.

There were three or four Chinese movie theaters in Hongkew, which specialized in American pictures, and these were quickly patronized by refugees -- eager not only for entertainment, but also for an opportunity to learn English. During the war, American pictures were forbidden, of course, but old German, French, Italian and Russian movies helped to provide a fairly entertaining film-fare.

Among the refugees, there were many professional, as well as amateur, entertainers and these quickly swung into action. Actors organized drama groups; musicians set up bands and orchestras; and several singers even formed a light opera company, which put on some highly successful operettas.

There were, of course, the ubiquitous coffeehouses and bridge clubs, and even a few nightclubs, including a very pleasant roof-terrace on one of the neighbourhood's tallest buildings, which was a great boon during the hot summers. On the other hand, there were no bars or corner pubs until after the war, when a few were opened to cater to American serviceme

As could be expected in a closely-knit (and closely-packed) community of this type, there was a good deal of home-entertaining and the art of conversation reached an all-time high. Because of the scarcity of food, the hostess usually agreed to provide hot water, while the guests brought their own coffee (or, more generally, coffee substitute), tea and sugar or saccharin.

Shortly after their arrival, refugees set up soccer teams, and

within a few months they had succeeded in establishing a 3-division amateur soccer league, which conducted annual tournaments before thousands of enthusiastic spectators, and whose teams even competed with Chinese and other foreign squads. Other popular sports included boxing, ping pong, a little tennis and even some baseball, which was introduced by the Japanese.

Although the community did not have any public libraries, several enterprising refugees rounded up small stocks of books and established highly successful circulating libraries. The younger element in the community -- and here I speak from personal experience -- carried on a booming trade in comic books.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER GROUPS

When the refugees first arrived in Shanghai, the wealthy foreign elements, such as the British, Americans, Dutch and French, were not especially overjoyed. In the first place, they regarded the refugees as a definite nuisance, although it must be added that many of them did contribute generously to aid funds. But, what was probably more importsnt, was the fact that the influx of poverty-stricken Europeans served to lower still another notch the esteem in which the white man had once been held by the Chinese. At the beginning of the century, a white man in Shanghai was virtually a demi-god. The White Russian immigration after 1917, as well as numerous other factors, such as the Chinese Revolution and the rising spirit of nationalism, had begun to change the attitude of the Chinese towards foreigners, and the arrival of the ragged refugees merely served to strengthen this growing trend.

The Sephardic and Russian Jews were also not enthusiastic over the coming of the refugees. Of course, they were anxious to aid their persecuted co-religionists, and as I have emphasized throughout this report, they rendered invaluable assistance. But there was never any real "rapprochement" between the established communities and the newcomers, except possibly between the Orthodox Polish Jews and their White Russian

counterparts.

Relations with the Chinese were pretty good, on the whole. Of course, there were numerous instances where Chinese tried to humiliate and insult the refugees in public, secure in the knowledge that the immigrants were vastly outnumbered and could not fight back. This type of behavior was particularly prevalent after the war, when the city was in the hands of Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Government. But I am convinced that these Chinese were not motivated by any kind of anti-Semitism but were merely availing themselves of the opportunity to "get back" at some whites for the humiliations they themselves ~~had~~ once had to suffer under the British and French. In general, however, relations with the Chinese were very friendly. In our early and more prosperous years, my family had retained a Chinese housboy, an "amah"(nursemaid), and even a part-time ricksha coolie, but these luxuries ceased as soon as the war began. Most refugees never came into contact with higher-class Chinese, and the exigencies of their existence forced them to treat the ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ the lower-class Chinese, who were their neighbors and customers, as equals. But although they lived and worked with them, very few refugees ever became really well-acquainted with them. I would surmise that less than 1% ever learned to speak the language properly, although they did pick up a few necessary words and expressions, and I know of only two persons who learned how to read and write Chinese. Most of the refugees had enough trouble trying to master English, which was the more important language in this bi-lingual city. In contrast to the refugees, many Chinese learned to speak fluent German. Although history shows that the Chinese always swallow up invaders and immigrants, here is one instance where they adopted infinitely more refugee customs and traits than vice versa. But, of course, the refugee colony lasted only twelve years, so I don't think I'll make this the basis for a sweeping new historical thesis.

At various points in this paper I have already touched upon the refugees' relations with the Japanese. In general, they were surprisingly good. Except for a few brutal officials like Mr. Goya, most of the Japanese treated the immigrants with a sort of firm correctness. They were fully aware of the fact that the refugees were praying for the defeat of Japan, but they seemed to be able to understand this attitude. Like the Chinese, they never manifested ~~xxxx~~ any sort of anti-Semitism, and whatever action they took against the refugees was based on their being potentially dangerous aliens and not on their religion.

CONCLUSION

The war in the Far East ended in August 1945, and the next few months were a period of indescribable confusion and chaos, as over a hundred thousand American troops flowed into the city. To me the whole period is just one big blur -- a kaleidoscopic procession of soldiers, sailors, jeeps, WACS, battleships, B-29's, celebrations, Nationalist and Communist troops, UNRRA officials, nightclubs, girls -- and, above all, INFLATION !

In the midst of all this confusion, the Hongkew Community was beginning to break up, as hundreds of refugees started to leave for America, Australia, ~~xxx~~ Palestine, and Europe. People talked of nothing else but leaving the city; those who had no immediate prospects of a visa were almost hysterical at the thought of being left behind.

Our turn finally came in 1947, and although I had been as anxious as everyone else to leave the city, I must confess that when I finally stood at the rail of our vessel I viewed the receding skyline of Shanghai with deep pangs of regret. We had suffered a great deal in that city, but there were also many pleasant memories and when you ~~xxxx~~ live in a place for nine years you become sort of attached to it. Even nowadays I fondly think of Shanghai as my hometown, and I hope that one day I shall be able to visit it again.

After a sentimental ending like the above, I suppose I ought to leave well enough alone, but there are a few thoughts of which I must still unburden myself.

In the first place, I am painfully conscious of the fact that this report is extremely superficial and incomplete. I have tried to paint a fairly comprehensive picture of the community, but I doubt that I even managed to sketch in the bare outlines. The topic is far too broad in scope to be confined into a few type-written pages, and even as I write these lines, new thoughts and ideas, memories and recollections, keep welling up, but of course it is too late to include them in the report.

One thing that the writing of this paper has taught me is how difficult it really is to set down a truly objective and impersonal description of a group of people, unless one happens to be a trained anthropologist or sociologist. Of course, the problem was intensified in this case by the fact that I had been a member of the group myself. But even if I had written about the Bolivian "cholos", for example, I would have run into similar difficulties. Unless one happens to know what to look for, what kind of observations to make, and unless one takes copious notes at the time these observations are made, a truly valid description of the people is impossible; and perhaps this explains why, despite my earnest efforts to the contrary, this paper finally turned out to be a loosely-connected narrative instead of x the anthropological report I had intended it to be.

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THE ETERNAL LIGHT

1655

FROM THE FAR CORNERS - JEWS AROUND THE WORLD

A CONVERSATION WITH WILLIAM SCHURTMAN

Presented by
The National Broadcasting Company, Inc.
as a public service and produced under
the auspices of The Jewish Theological
Seminary of America.

NBC RADIO NETWORK
SUNDAY, JANUARY 19, 1986

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(MUSIC)

ANNOUNCER: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America presents THE ETERNAL LIGHT.

Today's program is the third in a four-week series entitled "From the Far Corners, Jews from Around the World."

We bring you today "A Conversation with William Schurtman" of New York, an expert in international law, who will talk about his childhood years in the Jewish community in Shanghai, China during World War II.

Speaking with him is Martin Bookspan, noted critic and commentator.

Mr. Bookspan.

MR. MARTIN BOOKSPAN: Mr. Schurtman, we are presently in THE ETERNAL LIGHT involved in discussing Jewish communities in rather exotic parts of the world, and the exotic part that you represent is Shanghai, where you spent nine years of your very early life. I'm almost tempted to say interned, although that's obviously not the right word. But you were living there as a refugee from Hitler's Germany.

MR. WILLIAM SCHURTMAN: That's correct.

BOOKSPAN: How did the family happen to come to Shanghai?

SCHURTMAN: My family left Vienna in a bit of a hurry. My father had been arrested by the Gestapo. And, miraculously, they released him one day. He came home --I still have a distinct memory of it, I was six-and-a-half at the time. My mother was overjoyed to see him. She could hardly believe that he was free again. And he said, "We have no time to waste, we're leaving in twenty minutes."

BOOKSPAN: Hmm.

SCHURTMAN: And she said, "Where are we going?" And he said, "To China."

She said, "What should I pack?" And he said, "Nothing."

And we were literally on the train to Italy half-an-hour later, got across the

SCHURTMAN: (CONT) border and took a ship to China, to Shanghai.

It was about a month-long trip. We went by way of the Suez Canal, India. It was a fascinating trip for a youngster. For my parents, of course, it was awful.

BOOKSPAN: Harrowing, I would imagine.

SCHURTMAN: They had left everything behind. My father didn't have time to wind up his business.

BOOKSPAN: What was his business?

SCHURTMAN: He was in the textile business, but he was also a politician by avocation. And one reason the Nazis arrested him right after the Anschluss was not so much because he was Jewish, at that point, but because he was in the Social Democratic Party.

BOOKSPAN: How did he happen to be released? Because that, of course, was most unusual.

SCHURTMAN: Well, he was released with several of his fellow political leaders, and they were all rearrested a few days later and never heard of again. So, he really did the right thing, moving in a hurry.

You know, I sometimes think back: He was forty-two at the time. Would I at the age of forty-two be able to leave everything I've built up, the country I was born in, the country in whose army I served, just leave everything behind without a moment's thought.

Well, he did.

BOOKSPAN: Yes.

That, of course, brings up the extraordinary heroism and courage of those who did, who had the foresight to get out while they could.

SCHURTMAN: Yes. Well, I'm not sure heroism is the right word, but it was certainly foresight, because many just kept staying on and on. They couldn't believe what was happening.

BOOKSPAN: Yes.

SCHURTMAN: And many perished as a result, including members of my own family.

In any event, you asked, why did we go to China? The reason was that Shanghai was an international city at the time. And it was literally the only spot in the entire world where you could go without a visa. Anyone could get in.

And we were among the vanguard of Nazi refugees to come to Shanghai. We were among the first few hundred.

BOOKSPAN: You must be talking about 1938.

SCHURTMAN: This was 1938, the Fall of 1938.

But, then, subsequently, in 1939, 1940, many more refugees came from the various Nazi-occupied countries, mostly, but not all Jewish. And I'd say by the time the immigration stream closed, there must have been between 20- and 25,000 who made Shanghai their refuge.

BOOKSPAN: Under what conditions did you live in Shanghai?

SCHURTMAN: Well, when we first arrived, my father immediately managed to get a very good job with a shipping line. And we lived in what was then known as the international settlement, which was run by the British and the Americans. There was also a French concession, run by the French. And Shanghai was a very international, modern, sophisticated city. We lived extremely well at the beginning. We had a lovely apartment. I went to a British-run, Jewish school, the Shanghai Jewish School, which had been established by Sephardic Jews who had come to Shanghai in the nineteenth century. They had a British headmaster; they ran the school along British lines. That's why I learned to speak English. And we lived quite well.

Until Pearl Harbor, when the Japanese took over the City, and then things changed drastically.

SCHURTMAN: (CONT) I should add, however, that our position was fairly unusual, because the refugees who came after we did, many of them had difficulties getting jobs. Many of them lived in refugee camps, which were set up initially by well-meaning local citizens, and eventually the American Joint Distribution Committee took over the running of some of these camps. And they lived in pretty miserable refugee camps, which, of course, got worse during the war then.

BOOKSPAN: I want to come back to that. But, first, as you've already said, there was a Jewish presence in Shanghai, going back a couple of hundred years.

SCHURTMAN: Yes. There were actually two waves, three waves of Jewish immigration into Shanghai. The first one was at the end of the 19th century, when a lot of Iraqi and Persian Jews who were British subjects at the time came to Shanghai. Some of the names may be familiar to you: Sir Victor Sassoon, a Mr. Kadoori, who was very wealthy. I'm trying to think of some of the other names. In any event, they established a Sephardic presence at the end of the 19th century, did extremely well, were very religious Jews, and established themselves in the mainstream of Shanghai society.

At the end of World War I, there was a second wave of Jewish immigration, and those were White Russians, refugees from the Bolsheviks who happened to be Jewish. There were a lot of White Russians who were not Jewish. There were tens of thousands of White Russians who came from Russia by way of North China, Harbin, Vladivostok, which was in the Soviet Union, and worked their way down to Shanghai.

They gradually established themselves, and by the time we came in the 30's, most of them were doing extremely well.

BOOKSPAN: How much intercourse was there between that community and the wave of World War II refugees?

SCHURTMAN: Not too much. The Jews who were already

SCHURTMAN: (CONT) in Shanghai were, of course, of two minds. On the one hand, they were anxious to help their fellow co-religionists. On the other hand, there was concern that this huge wave of additional Jewish refugees would put a tremendous burden on Shanghai generally. It would put a burden on the existing Jewish community.

So they had some mixed emotions about it. But on the whole, they tried very hard to help the refugees. And I for one am very grateful to them.

BOOKSPAN: And that community, the one that was reasonably well established, of course, represented a very tiny fraction of the overall population of Shanghai.

SCHURTMAN: Yes, the population of Shanghai was about six million at the time. Most of them were Chinese, of course. There was a heavy foreign presence, mainly Americans, British, French, to a much lesser degree Germans, and the Japanese. The Japanese had been fighting the Chinese since at least 1937 or earlier, and they had occupied the so-called Chinese portion of Shanghai, the one that was subject to the Chinese government.

So that was occupied by the Japanese. There had been severe fighting in 1937. And the Americans, British and French continued to hold the international part of Shanghai.

BOOKSPAN: In the part that had been held by the Chinese, or the Chinese sector, was there any overt, or maybe even covert anti-Semitism toward the Jewish community?

SCHURTMAN: Not at that point, no.

BOOKSPAN: Uh hmm...

SCHURTMAN: Many of the Jewish refugees actually went into camps which were in the Japanese-held sector, simply because that was one of the poorer sections of the city, and it was cheaper to set up camps in that section.

BOOKSPAN: Hmm.

Well, now, you've told us that in the early stages of your living in Shanghai, life was not inconvenient, and not uncomfort able, but it did get to be pretty rough after awhile.

SCHURTMAN: Yes, well, what happened was that on Pearl Harbor Day, the Japanese attacked the international part of Shanghai. There was some defense that was put up. There was an American gunboat and a British gunboat in the harbor of Shanghai. They had a major naval battle. The Japanese battleships fighting the dive-bombers. And I remember it well, because my home was about two blocks away from the harbor. So, we just got up in the middle of the night and watched the battle. ..(LAUGHS)

BOOKSPAN: Hmm.

SCHURTMAN: There wasn't much else we could do.

BOOKSPAN: Some entertainment.

SCHURTMAN: And in any event, the Japanese immediately conquered the rest of Shanghai, marched in the next day and occupied it.

And for the first few months, there was nothing much happened. Life didn't change radically because the Japanese were feeling their way, trying to decide what to do with this city. The British, Americans and I think the French were interned by the Japanese in regular internment camps. They left us alone for the time being. When I say us, I mean the refugees from Hitler-Germany.

But, gradually, and we learned much of this after the war, when American intelligence uncovered a lot of what had happened, and it was published in various papers and magazines -- gradually the Nazis started putting pressure on the Japanese to do something about these Jewish refugees.

They told the Japanese they were a menace, that they were obviously disposing of the Jews in the Nazi-occupied countries. And

SCHURTMAN: (CONT)

since Japan was a member of the Axis, they should also take action against the Jews.

The Japanese were opposed to taking any kind of drastic action against the Jewish refugees, as far as I could tell, and this is based mainly on my reading subsequently, for two reasons: In the first place the Japanese were convinced that the Jews were tremendously influential in the United States. And they felt that if they treated this group of Jews reasonably well, but at the same time held them as hostage, they could put pressure on the American Jewish community, which in turn would put pressure on the American government to work out something with the Japanese.

In other words, they were in effect convinced of the propaganda that had been made by the Nazis and by others that America was run by the Jews. ..(LAUGHS)..

BOOKSPAN:

Would that there had been a strong and powerful influence by the American Jewish community in those years.

SCHURTMAN:

Exactly.

The second reason, which I think speaks very well for the Japanese as a people, is that they were simply appalled by the notion of genocide, of killing people because of their race or religion.

The Japanese, as we all know, could be very difficult and very cruel in the war, in a war situation. Where troops would fight other troops, or even where troops entered a conquered city. The rape of Nanking is a perfect example.

On the other hand, the Japanese did not believe in just killing people en masse, the way the Nazis did.

And we heard after the war, and I've never been able to fully document it, that the Nazis had in fact sent engineers and experts to Shanghai to help the Japanese build gas chambers and that the Japanese absolutely refused to do it.

BOOKSPAN: Hmm.

SCHURTMAN: What the Nazis finally did succeed in doing was convincing the Japanese that these 20- or 25,000 Jewish refugees were in effect the fifth column. They were obviously rooting for the Allies to win the war, and something had to be done about them.

And at the beginning -- I think it was at the beginning of 1943, the Japanese finally took an interim step. They proclaimed that any Jewish refugee who had come to Shanghai after the beginning of 1938 -- this was intended to exclude the earlier Jewish refugees, or Jewish immigrants -- that the post-1938 refugees had to go into what they loosely called a designated area, which turned out to be a ghetto in every sense of the word.

They took an area in the originally Japanese occupied part of the city, where many of these refugee camps had already been established, they marked off approximately twenty or thirty square blocks, put barbed wire around the area, posted sentries, and said, "From now on, all Jewish refugees must live in that area."

What they didn't do is they didn't furnish housing, they didn't furnish food.

BOOKSPAN: Hmm.

SCHURTMAN: So, by a certain date, all refugees had to find housing in that area by buying it from the Chinese who lived there.

You can imagine what happened to real estate prices. The housing was mostly very substandard. And people were simply forced to move into this community.

Now, once they were in the community, they were not supported by the Japanese. Approximately, I'd say, 2,000 of the refugees were given special passes to go into Shanghai proper and continue to try to earn a living, and bring money back into the community. They had to observe a curfew, they had to be back at a certain

SCHURTMAN: (CONT) time, they had to get their passes renewed periodically, every thirty or ninety days. Getting your passport issued or renewed was a harrowing procedure, because they had a Japanese official who was really a psychopathic personality, a man named Ghoya, G H O Y A, who treated the passport applicants in an absolutely bizarre fashion. I can get back to that in more detail because it's an interesting vignette.

BOOKSPAN: Let me just interrupt you for a moment to remind our listeners that our guest on today's ETERNAL LIGHT program is William Schurtman, and we're talking about the Jewish community in Shanghai during the period of World War II.

Please continue, Mr. Schurtman.

SCHURTMAN: As I said, a select number of the refugees continued to earn a living in Shanghai. My father and my mother were among them.

They brought money back into the community, and that helped support the community in part. In part, the community was supported by donations from the Russian and Sephardic Jews who were living in Shanghai. They were not put into any kind of ghetto, they were allowed to continue to live in a relatively unrestricted -- I should amend that now that I think about it. The Sephardic Jews were British subjects. They were interned. The White Russian Jews on the other hand were left alone. They continued to run their businesses and they funneled a lot of help to the refugee community.

In addition, American refugee committees such as the Joint Distribution Committee managed to continue to funnel a certain amount of aid into the community by way of the Red Cross.

BOOKSPAN: What were such things as sanitary conditions and health conditions like in the community?

SCHURTMAN: They were relatively primitive. Most of the houses did not have -- they had running

SCHURTMAN: (CONT) water but they did not have flushing toilets. Which was not unusual in the poorer sections of China anyway. And what you would have is you would have Chinese coolies come around once a day with so-called honey pots. These were simply hand-drawn carts, where they would pick up the manure. That's how the toilets were cleaned out.

Most people lived in very cramped quarters. For example, my parents and I who had one of the better quarters in the ghetto, had a single room about nine by twelve, which the three of us shared.

BOOKSPAN: Hmm.

SCHURTMAN: We slept in the room, we ate in the room. It was our living room, our kitchen; everything happened in that one room. And this was one of the better quarters. The actual camps had much more -- in the camps the people lived in barracks, where you had one bed next to another. And people would tag sheets between the beds to maintain some kind of privacy.

BOOKSPAN: What was the attitude toward Jewish life? Were you able to observe the holidays and observe..

SCHURTMAN: Yes.

BOOKSPAN: Yes.

SCHURTMAN: The community was to a large extent self-governing. It set up its own governing council, which of course was under the supervision of the Japanese. And in many ways it was an extremely well-run, interesting community. Not only was life in the ghetto governed by these various governing groups, but we had an internal newspaper, which was quite full of information. There was an enormous amount of cultural activity. Theater groups, opera groups, operettas, chamber music concerts, other concerts. And many of the people had nothing else to do. Many of them were very cultured, and the only outlet that they could find was in continuing these

SCHURTMAN: (CONT) cultural activities. Sports was also a very active item. There were several soccer leagues, and people would play soccer every weekend.

There was a school in the ghetto; I didn't go to it myself. I was allowed -- I had a pass, too, from Mr. Ghoya, whom I had to face every ninety days.

BOOKSPAN: Hmm.

SCHURTMAN: And I had a pass to continue to go to my original school, which was known as the Shanghai Jewish School. That was the originally British-run school, which was taken over by White Russian teachers who continued to run it.

Most of the children in the ghetto went to a school that had been established in the ghetto itself, which was also run primarily along British lines. The language was English; everyone in Shanghai spoke English. And it was an English curriculum.

BOOKSPAN: Was there any way to get news from the outside world, or did you exist in a total vacuum.

SCHURTMAN: Oh, no. We got news from the outside world in various ways. The Japanese, on the whole, sent through news. They were censored, of course. But you got a pretty good idea of what was going on.

In addition to that, the Russians had newspapers in Shanghai, English-language newspapers. And when I speak of the Russians now, I mean the Soviets. They had a presence in Shanghai. They were not fighting the Japanese until the last days of the war when they entered the war against Japan, and they were allowed to continue to publish newspapers. So, I would say we were remarkably well informed. We knew about the bad side of the war, the defeats of the American forces when it first began, and we also knew when the tide of war started turning. And our big concern was, would we survive until the Allies won.

SCHURTMAN: (CONT) That's really a race against time.

BOOKSPAN: That's a good point at which to come back to Mr. Ghoya. Tell us a little bit more about him.

SCHURTMAN: Mr. Ghoya, I'm not sure what his profession had been in Japan. He was a civilian. And he was put in charge of issuing passports to the Jews, to the Jewish refugees, supervising their life. And the man, the only way I can describe him is he was a paranoid psychopathic personality. He insisted on being called "The King of the Jews."

BOOKSPAN: Oh, my.

SCHURTMAN: This was not just a joke. He took it very seriously. He insisted on attending cultural events, Jewish events. He would come in with an entourage of followers and behave as though he were the King. He was a very short man, probably had a Napoleonic complex. And there were just bizarre incidents when people came to renew their passports.

For example, in one case, if he had a very tall refugee applying for a passport, he'd jump on his desk and say, "Now I'm taller than you," and start slapping the man.

BOOKSPAN: Hmm.

SCHURTMAN: He was completely unpredictable. You never knew whether he'd be nice to you, or whether he would beat you up.

Slapping, incidentally, was a Japanese custom which wasn't applied only to the refugees. Japanese officers would slap their troops, and it was simply an accepted custom.

Ghoya was bizarre. And to this day, people talk about him, and are very angry about what he did. But as far as I know, he never actually caused the death of any refugee.

There was another Japanese officer; I think

SCHURTMAN: (CONT) his name was Akura. And he was much more difficult. He was really a sadist in every sense of the word. And he caused a number of people to die, not by killing them outright, but by sending them to Chinese prisons where they contracted typhoid fever and died. He was a much more dangerous personality.

BOOKSPAN: Hmm.

SCHURTMAN: But with the exception of these two people, on the whole, the Japanese did not treat us badly.

BOOKSPAN: When you say people still talk about Ghoya, implicit in that is the information that there are reunions, get-togethers of those of you who were in the community.

SCHURTMAN: Yes, in fact there was a reunion of, I think, about a thousand Shanghai refugees just a few weeks ago, held at the Concord Hotel in Kiamesha. And former refugees came from all over the world, all parts of the United States, Canada, Australia, Europe, to just get to meet each other again. And one of the lively topics of conversation was the antics of Mr. Ghoya. (LAUGHS)...

BOOKSPAN: (LAUGHS)...

Now, of course, years back -- years later -- one can look back..

SCHURTMAN: But in those days, I mean, you know, my father who was about as brave a man as I know, when he had to go in and apply to Ghoya for passport renewal, he was terrified.

BOOKSPAN: Hmm.

SCHURTMAN: And most people were terrified. It was a simply terrifying experience.

BOOKSPAN: Have you been back to Shanghai since?

SCHURTMAN: Yes, I was back three years ago. I went with a group of American lawyers, who had

SCHURTMAN: (CONT) been invited by the Chinese government to give lectures on American and international law in Peking and Shanghai. And we travelled all over China. I spent several days in Shanghai, and just before I got to Shanghai I told our host, who was a vice-minister of the Chinese railroad ministry, "I'm now going back to my hometown." ..

BOOKSPAN: (LAUGHS)

SCHURTMAN: "I want to show my wife the places I lived, and I don't want to be with any guides or interpreters. So, for the next three days you won't see me." And he had absolutely no objection to my leaving the group. And each day my wife and I would either go on walking tours, or we would find what are known as pedicabs. These are rickshaws with bicycle drivers propelling them. And we would simply wander all over my old haunts. And most of them still existed in unchanged form.

BOOKSPAN: That amazes me. I was going to ask, was there any sign of what you could recognize?

SCHURTMAN: Oh, yes. The school that I had gone to is now a Chinese newspaper office. There was a synagogue next to the school; you can still see the Star of David in it. It's still a synagogue building, but it is now used as a storeroom for the newspaper.

The houses that we lived in, at least the last one that we lived in, was still intact. It is now full of Chinese families. They were terribly puzzled when my wife and I showed up and started taking pictures. But we managed to explain to them who I was and they took it with good grace.

BOOKSPAN: Do you speak Chinese?

SCHURTMAN: Not really anymore. I used to speak a Shanghai dialect when I was a kid, but it's virtually all gone now. I never did learn Mandarin.

You see, one of the unfortunate things: If I had to do it all over again, knowing what I know now, I would have learned Chinese, I would have learned Japanese.

SCHURTMAN: (CONT)

But at that time, we regarded Shanghai -- -- all the refugees, with a few exceptions regarded Shanghai as a temporary way station. It was simply a place where we would try to live out the war, and after the war people intended to go on to the United States, Australia, Canada, Europe, anyplace else. So, we all learned English, because English was the main language in Shanghai. Even the Chinese spoke English. So, everyone learned English. Very few people, unfortunately, learned Chinese, because they just had no intention of staying there.

BOOKSPAN:

I need about a ten-word reply to this question because we're running out of time: Is there any Jewish presence in Shanghai today?

SCHURTMAN:

As far as I know, there's virtually no Jewish presence. I think a few elderly refugees, mostly White Russians, are still there, but no one else is left.

BOOKSPAN:

Thank you so much, Mr. Schurtman. It's been a pleasure speaking with you today, and hearing about your experiences in Shanghai.

SCHURTMAN:

Well, I was delighted to be on your program, and I thank you for inviting me.

ANNOUNCER:

You have been listening to Part Three in a four-week series entitled "From the Far Corners, Jews from Around the World."

Today, William Schurtman discussed his years in the Jewish community in Shanghai, China during World War II. Speaking with him was Martin Bookspan.

If you would like a transcript of today's program, please send your name and address with one dollar to cover the cost of postage and handling to the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 3080 Broadway, New York, New York 10027.

We invite you to join us next week when THE ETERNAL LIGHT presents Part Four in this series, "A Conversation with Josh Narrowe." of Stockholm, Sweden.

ANNOUNCER: This is Roger Tuttle speaking.

NBC Engineer, Sherry Freeman.

For the Seminary, Milton E. Krents, Executive Producer, and Adele Breen, Associate Producer.

NBC provides time and assistance to major faith groups to present religious views. Today's program was produced for the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

(MUSIC)

END TRANSCRIPT